

# Committee on Resources, Full Committee

- - Rep. James V. Hansen, Chairman

U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20515-6201 - - (202) 225-2761

---

## Witness Statement

---

Statement of the  
International Brotherhood of Teamsters  
to the  
Committee on Resources  
U.S. House of Representatives

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jerry Hood, Special Assistant to the General President for Energy at the International Brotherhood of Teamsters and Principal Officer of Teamsters Local 959 in Alaska. In my roles as a Teamster official at the local and international levels, I am here today to convey the support of my union, its 1.5 million members, and our General President James P. Hoffa, for the House "Energy Security Act."

However, my support of this legislation does not end with my union affiliation. As a consumer, as an Alaskan, and as a father, I urge you to vote for the "Energy Security Act."

As a consumer, I support this bill. While some opponents of increasing energy supply would like you to believe that there is no energy crisis, the evidence is incontrovertible. This past winter, working families from central and northeast states were faced with record high home heating bills. Rolling blackouts have plagued California for two straight summers. Gasoline prices continue to put the squeeze on low and middle income Americans, forcing many to cancel summer vacations.

And, just this past Sunday, the Baltimore Sun ran a story on 12,000 low-income Maryland families who face the very real possibility of having their utilities cut off. According to the article, these families are still trying to find a way to pay for their winter heating bills, due to the fact that the cost of fuel has doubled and tripled over the previous year.

While the article focuses on metropolitan Baltimore, it also paints the picture of a growing national crisis. More than four million households in 19 states face a similar fate – having their power cut off during the hottest days of summer. The article also notes that low-income families are hit especially hard by skyrocketing energy costs, as they tend to spend three times more of their income on energy costs than medium-income families.

For these consumers – the 12,000 in Maryland and the 4.3 million nationwide – the energy crisis is more than a subject to be debated on Sunday mornings. It is a reality that hit them this winter, continues to haunt them today, and threatens to permanently harm their ability to provide for their families.

As an Alaskan, I support this bill. For decades, we have been proving that the need to provide energy for Americans can be balanced with the need to protect the environment. Since the opening of Prudhoe Bay in the early 1970's, the State of Alaska played a critical role in increasing the United States' energy

independence – providing, at its peak, more than 2 million barrels a day. Even with the recent decline in oil production, Alaska still supplies the country with one fifth of its domestic oil. And we have accomplished this with minimal impact to the environment, which is one of the reasons why 75% of Alaskans support the opening of ANWR.

Alaskan oil is produced using the cleanest, most technologically advanced, environmentally sensitive methods in the world. We – Alaskans – set the standard for the industry. This is due, in no small part, to a group of environmentalists who have played a critical role in ensuring that we produce oil in Alaska in the most responsible manner possible. Unlike most environmental groups, this one does not have an office in Washington, D.C. That is because this group has, for generations, lived in Alaska, in ANWR, in Section 1002, in the village of Kaktovik.

This group is the Inupiat – a community indigenous to the North Slope of Alaska. Long before there were phone banks, blast faxes, or direct mail solicitations, the Inupiat cared for the land in and around ANWR. For centuries, the Inupiat have balanced their need to use the land and its resources with a desire to ensure that those resources would remain for future generations. With the introduction of oil production in the 1970's, the Inupiat continued their role as stewards of the land.

In light of this history, I find it unconscionable that Congress would prohibit the people of Kaktovik from utilizing the petroleum resources that lie beneath their own, private lands. However, that is the reality today. If any member of Congress considers himself or herself to be an advocate for the native peoples of this country, then there is only one option – give the Inupiat people the right to use their lands to provide for their families. I ask you – Who in this room could possibly believe that he or she is more qualified than the Inupiat on the issue of protecting the North Slope of Alaska?

As a father, I support this bill. The United States is increasingly dependent on foreign nations for its energy needs. Our dependence on foreign oil, in particular, leaves us vulnerable to the whims and machinations of unscrupulous foreign nations.

Earlier this year, Iraq was supplying 700,000 barrels of oil to our country every day and using the revenues to buy chemicals, missiles, and other weapons of mass destruction that are designed for use against our allies – particularly Israel. At the same time, United States military personnel put their lives on the line every day to enforce the no fly zone, all because of our need to protect the oil supply in the region. This makes no sense.

Even nations that are not preparing for war against our allies do not hold paramount the effect of oil pricing on our national security. Their chief concern, of course, is profit. OPEC unabashedly holds back supply in order to keep prices high; as our domestic energy supplies decrease, so does our ability to respond to this price fixing.

Today, we are dependent on foreign nations for more than 50% of our oil supply. While this may not seem that dire under current circumstances, it will become a real problem in a time of crisis or international conflict. We should set, as a minimum, the goal of decreasing our dependence on foreign oil to less than 50%. While conservation and efficiency measures can help us in meeting that goal, it cannot be done without increasing domestic supply. It cannot be done without the efforts set forth in this bill.

Finally, as a Teamster, I support this bill. Every day, more than 600,000 Teamsters start their day by turning a key to an 18-wheeler, a bus, a cab, or a delivery van. Two hundred thousand Teamsters work in industries

or for companies that would directly benefit from the opening of ANWR. For these men and women, a reliable and affordable source of petroleum isn't just important – it is critical to their livelihood.

In addition, the Wharton Econometrics Institute estimates that opening ANWR will create 735,000 jobs throughout the United States. Many of these jobs will be in the energy industry, which is among the most unionized industries in the country. We estimate that over 25,000 of those jobs will go to Teamsters – in direct oil production related jobs alone. The potential to create jobs – good paying, secure jobs with decent benefits – is overwhelming.

However, this is not just about job creation; it is about job preservation. In the last decade, more than 500,000 jobs have been lost in the domestic oil and gas industries. Many of those were Teamsters jobs. Many of those were members of my local. In every industry, the jobs losses are mounting. Already this year, 400,000 jobs have disappeared from the American economic landscape. If we do not act now to reinvigorate the economy, particularly the domestic energy industry, this trend will continue. Congress must act now to reverse it.

In other words, while many of you may consider a vote for this bill as a vote for the big, bad oil industry, I see it as something else.

I see it as a vote for increasing the United States' energy independence. I see it as a vote for national security. I see it as a vote to support oil production where it is done using the most environmentally sensitive methods in the world. I see it as a vote for Native American rights. I see it as a vote to keep the power on for 12,000 low income Marylanders.

Most importantly, I see it as a vote to put Americans, including Teamsters, to work.

For these reasons, I urge you to vote for the "Energy Security Act."

# # #